

Report to:

Newark Community Project for People With A.I.D.S.

National AIDS Network (NAN)
Skills Building Conference

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The breadth was breathtaking. "What You Always Wanted To Know about AIDS (But were Afraid to Ask)" was available in the cafeteria benefit plan of the National AIDS Network (NAN). Whether it was community organizing, federal funding, media outreach, incarcerated populations, non-profit board operations or managing stress and change, it was all available. The problem was the cafeteria benefit plan was so varied, (over one hundred workshops) that one could only choose very few. But the choices were defensible.

In addition to workshops NAN provided topical presentations by noted experts in the field. They included the keynote speaker, Jonathan Mann, M.D., Director, Global Programme on AIDS of the World Health Organization, Mark Smith, M.D. of Johns Hopkins University and the new NAN Executive Director, Eric Engstrom.

Literature regarding AIDS concerns were available in abundance on practically any AIDS topic or concern one could be interested. It was free and widely available. I saw to it that NORPWA received their fair share of this generous resource.

The tone set by the panelists who set the tone for the conference was a tone of caution mixed with fear. Many expressed concerns that "... the public is worn out and numbed by the numbers" from almost ten (10) years of constant reporting and talking about AIDS. They found that AIDS started in the 70's and is now on five (5) continents and about one million HIV infected individuals in the United States. Thus they expect no slow down of the spread of AIDS and now would like to see much of the focus on treatment shifted to prevention. With AIDS momentum gaining in the world, increasing in Eastern Europe and in Africa, and now with worldwide reporting a toll of five to ten million people infecting drugs and alcohol, data last years were unimpressive. The data last year stated that the world is slow to react. They are afraid that once again AIDS will spread, for a lack of information, understanding, social discrimination, drug use, etc. They suggest "... we will fail as a world..." should we not take significant action to stop the spread.

What did the data last suggest to stop this growing AIDS epidemic? Fear is not the solution, but clearly feeling the need to heed the faith, the data last suggested:

- * The need for public commitment
- * Money
- * Community protests

- * Partnerships (Private sector)
- * Education
- * Prevention (a cure)

More optimistic were the participants in the workshops, over 900 of us. I chose to focus my attention on two areas: non-profit boards and fund raising.

"Ten Basic Responsibilities of Non-Profit Boards" and "What's Wrong with My Board?" claimed much of my time. Learning the definition of "Board Member participation" as that of "an unnatural act performed by consenting adults in public," got me off to a good start since so much of our board's work seems so unnatural to me. Nevertheless, the National Center for Non-profit Boards has published the following "Ten Basic Responsibilities of the Non-Profit Board" which we participants analyzed thoroughly:

1. Determine mission and purposes.
2. Select the Executive.
3. Support Executive and review performance.
4. Ensure effective planning.
5. Ensure adequate resources.
6. Manage resources effectively.
7. Monitor programs and services.
8. Enhance organization's public image.
9. Serve as court of appeal.
10. Assess its own performance.

There is not much that I personally do not like about the ten above responsibilities except to say that they need to be tailored to the specific organization and possibly condensed even more than has already been done by the National Center.

The Non-Profit Boards workshop suggested that good Boards don't have the same mistakes over and over again. It also suggested techniques for the board to evaluate itself. I saw that these suggested the executive to good administration and finance, should likewise in addition to NPB's own commitment to review its performance periodically in that we institute a tradition, five to fifteen minutes at the end of each meeting to evaluate each board meeting. An immediate job of board members as to how they have spent the last hour or two together will help us to assess how we will do it next time together at subsequent meetings and predict its effectiveness.

Finally, the most important assignment I took home with me from the conference was to raise the question of myself as

to how I could help to make my Board a more effective Board. I brought home these delectables from the NAN Cafeteria benefit plan:

1. Volunteer for the nominating committee. It is one of the keys to a good Board.
2. Make a personal pledge of time and/or money.
3. Resolve to provide a Board Member in-service training session(s) and/or morally binding agreements statement for each board member's use to assist them to determine specifically what their commitment is to NCPPWA in terms of their time and/or money.

The life blood of most non-profit organizations is money. This brings us to fund raising. The NAN Cafeteria plan offered the following reasons people give to AIDS organizations. In sum, "their heart is touched". As examples:

1. Personal contacts - friends, relatives.
2. People give to give back something, etc.
3. To protect themselves from AIDS.
4. To "ideals" not to organizations.
5. Makes them feel good (less guilty?).

NAN research indicates most givers earn under \$17,000 per year. However, it is only 3% of the givers who give 60% of the money donated. Ninety-five percent (95%) give forty (40%) of the donated dollars. In order for us to make solicitation efforts more effective NAN provided the following data.

Solicitation Techniques in terms of Effectiveness

1. Personal visits
2. Personal letters
3. Personal telephone calls
4. Telemarketing
5. Events
6. Renewals and upgrades
7. Chartermarketing
8. Canvassing
9. Direct mail

Many experts suggest that all Board Members should be automatic personal contributors as well as active fund raisers. NAN offers the following Board Member responsibilities in the area of fund raising.

1. Pledge a personal contribution
2. Ask others to consider giving
3. Assist development of case statement - why donors should give to the organization
4. Provide names of potential givers
5. Personal notes to formal appeals
6. Cultivate relationships with current and potential givers
7. Accompany staff in making solicitations

In conclusion, NAN's cafeteria benefit plan filled me up. The conference was essentially excellent in every aspect. I was particularly impressed with its organization, choice of facilities, professionalism of staffers and warmth of participants. I'm looking forward to more delectables next year.